RELAX:
YOU'RE
FUCKED
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The head can whinge as much as it wants, the body will still insist on food

INTRODUCTION

You are fucked. Let's not beat about the bush. You will live a life with small pleasures, not so small pains, and then die. That being the case it seems surprising that trees are not to be found everywhere with ropes handing from them. Well, despite all the moaning and gloom, it turns out we have a body that wants to live, and will do almost anything to ensure it keeps living. The head can whinge as much as it wants, but the body will still insist on food, shelter, warmth, sex and some level of general care. In fact, the head is the slave of body in any case, it spends all its days working out the best way to get the things the body needs - and the rest of the time it spends complaining.

Seeing as we tend to avoid pain and gravitate toward pleasure (even if the only pleasure we have is complaining), it would seem to make sense to find ways of dealing with life that encourage pleasure and minimize the pains. The seventy or so aphorisms, with their brief commentaries should help you do this. If they don't well - personally I don't care - you are fucked anyway.

You will be called selfish when you resist a request from a selfish person.

EVERYDAY LIFE

Definition of an optimist: someone who is a master of self-deception and denial.

Have you made your five positive affirmations this morning? And I hope your schedule is filled with power meetings, a trip to the gym, dinner with Fred and Sally, and anything else you can cram into the day - because the one thing you cannot afford to do is be still. Oh no, to be still means that you might start thinking about stuff - you know, death, futility, meaninglessness, and so on. Better keep busy - stay in denial. And shucks your "millionaire by Christmas" plans came to naught, as did your plan to lose fifty pounds - carefully monitored on your iPhone app. It's those donut binges that did it - comfort food to distract you from all the emotional pain. What, with the world not contorting itself to deliver on your juvenile ambitions, and that extra weight (donuts), and your relationship falling apart because your partner is sick of having their expectations raised by your wild imaginings, the only thing you are likely to achieve is extreme misery. But a new set of ra-ra morning affirmations should sort it all out.

Meanwhile, your friend Joe the pessimist, who you secretly despise, seems to be doing rather well. All those negative thoughts he entertains when setting out on a project - he considers that things might actually go wrong, and he even plans for it. Just as well that you are a master of self-deception and denial because its the only thing you have left.

Great news, your situation is hopeless.

You can know nothing except the certainty that you will die. On the surface it would seem that there is nothing you can do to alleviate this situation - which is exactly the point. Your situation is hopeless - abandon all efforts to make it otherwise and float downstream.

A being that cannot know what it will be thinking in a minute's time, or whether it will even be alive, can make no claims of being in control.

We so much want to be in control. To be in control is to be safe - or so we tell ourselves. So it would be fair to say that our illusion of control is driven by fear, and particularly fear of the unknown. It also follows that relinquishing control will invoke even more fear, and so it might just be better to carry on with the illusion - but there is a price to pay. All the spontaneity and joy disappears from life as we become increasingly bracketed by our control mechanisms. Children, after all, revel in being out of control and with it

comes play and spontaneity. It's your call - hide away within your illusion of control and live a well-ordered but dull life, or drop the pretense of control and feel the fresh breeze of freedom blow through your psyche.

By craving freedom you become less free.

Most people have a relatively naive idea of what freedom might be - lots of money, limitless power, going off-grid, deliverance from mortal life. Money comes with emotional bondage - people worry about it more when they have lots of it than they do when they have just a modest amount. As for power - well, power is something that has to be safeguarded 24x7 - there is always someone else ready to take it. Going off-grid is usually day-in and day-out hassle. And any notion of a "spiritual" deliverance from this human life is just imagination. If someone craves freedom, it merely means they are not free - and how could they be? We are determined by cause and effect, just like everything else - organic robots. The only freedom that is available to human beings is the total acceptance of their lack of freedom. Only then do we stop struggling against the inevitable and can sit back and row our boat gently down the stream.

Misery always follows gratification.

We all go running after gratification - a sense of fullness to fill an otherwise yawning emptiness. Gratification comes from pleasures of the body - a delicious meal, good sex, a workout in the gym. It can also come from pleasures of the mind - a task completed, viewing a beautiful vista, a skill learned. Spiritual people seek the ultimate gratification - enlightenment or salvation - a gratification that never ends. But here is the rub. You've attained or experienced whatever gratification was in your line of sight - then what? When you've got to the top of the roller-coaster, there is only one way to go - down. And so the gratification seekers live this neurotic life of highs and lows, desperately seeking a new high that doesn't have a low. The cold-turkey after gratification is experienced as a state of misery. Spiritual folk are more afflicted with this than your average Joe. They swing between the euphoria of meeting their new guru to the realization that it's the same old crap they just abandoned - but the search goes on.

Violence - when one entity diminishes the survival prospects of another entity. All life is violent.

You cannot live without violence, after all you do eat things that have been killed on your behalf. But it goes much deeper than this. The rich exploit the poor. The poor have lower life expectancy - this is violence. Ideologies, religions,

and vested interests bring about war. People die - this is violence. Envy is systemic - the delight in another's misfortune and pain at their good fortune - this is violence. Nature's signature is violence.

Every decision you ever make will be a mistake.

Those people who are always telling you what might have happened in their life if only they had not had such shit parents or shit teachers, or if they had just taken that opportunity to become a famous Hollywood actor. And if they had jumped on that lucky break to become a famous actor, they would now be whining that they missed the opportunity to become a quantum physicist because acting sucks and is so dull. We all go through life, thinking that if only we had decided that way instead of this, we'd be much happier. This type of thinking is the dumbest type of thinking a human being is capable of. First, we believe we had a choice and that given the same circumstances, we would act differently, and second, we think that things would have been much better if only we had made different decisions - duh. So let it be known that all the decisions you ever make will be mistakes, and more than this, they will be the only decisions you are going to make anyway.

Don't be afraid of the bad times, it is the good times that should be feared - they will give you confidence and hope and you will be poorly prepared for the bad times that inevitably follow. Don't be a sucker.

That person you fancy is warming to your advances, and you just got a significant pay rise at work. In a few days, you fly off on vacation in Hawaii, and your doctor just gave you a clean bill of health. You glow in your well-being and good fortune - until you don't. The hotel shown in the travel brochure is nothing like the pit you find yourself staying in. Your employer is having hard times and has to fire you, and that person you fancied has just given you the cold shoulder. And then to cap it all, something starts growing on the side of your nose - not dangerous apparently, but very unsightly. Life set you up, and then it pulled the rug from under your feet. It doesn't do to anthropomorphize life, but let's do it anyway. So, being a spiteful little fucker, life delivers a whole pile of goodies, and you feel on top of the world. As soon as you've been set up, life is free to stick the knife in. And life sticks the knife in for all of us sooner or later - we die. But there are plenty of little deaths along the way. The moral of the story is "don't believe in life," and by "believe," I mean, don't be suckered. When things are going well, just remember that the only way will be down from the crest of your wave. As a result, you will be less prone to the games of the spiteful little fucker.

Nature doesn't require that you are happy or sane, it just requires that you procreate and then die.

Happiness and misery are no concern of nature. The machinery of nature wants you to procreate, live long enough to rear your offspring, and then fade into oblivion. During this journey, life has no regard for your mental state provided you get the job done, and so it becomes your responsibility to ensure, as far as you can, that life is tolerable and maybe even happy. Our natural drivers would tend to push us in the direction of misery since we are loaded up with obligations and stressful situations, all of which take our energy and usually make us anxious. This being the case, it isn't too difficult to see that happiness is not a natural state and requires an individual to have self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. It needs us to be unusually self-focused and not to accept the default state of being a bag of genetics that nature can use to create another generation - which in turn will do the same. Happiness is your responsibility. Take the hand that nature deals, and happiness may be elusive. Take the trouble to come to understand yourself and the way the world works, and happiness (or at least less misery) is a genuine possibility. Nature doesn't even require that you are sane; simply pass on your genetics to the next generation, and you might as well have been Einstein as far as nature is concerned. Happiness is against nature.

Hang loose - you have control over absolutely nothing.

You don't have much control over your body; it can give up the ghost any time it pleases. As for emotions, there isn't much control there either - if you happen to see your partner kissing in an alleyway with someone else, your feelings will be all over the place. And thoughts - you have no idea what you will be thinking in a minute from now, so no control there either. External events are pretty much outside your control too. You might try and control people around you, but they will be mentally sticking the finger up and doing their own thing anyway. Whether your train is late, your flight delayed, the traffic congested, the weather cold, your TV busted, or whether you are sniffling with a cold - all of these things are entirely outside your control. This is good news really - hang loose, you have control over absolutely nothing.

You will be called selfish when you resist a request from a selfish person.

There is a strange twist in the way the word "selfish" is used. People who make demands on others will often call a person who rejects their demands - selfish. But surely the person making the demand is the selfish one - the one expecting someone else to modify their behavior to suit their needs. So I think we can say that a person is selfish when they expect others to obey their bidding. As an

example, let's consider someone who likes reading and wants to spend the evening finishing off a book they've enjoyed. When their partner suggests that they go out to a restaurant, the bookworm politely declines, only to be called selfish. But of course, it's the restaurant-goer that is being selfish. To expect someone to comply with one's inclinations is an act of selfishness. Unless there is mutual agreement on an issue, leave people alone - don't be selfish.

The need for external validation and approval is slavery.

Did you brush your teeth this morning? What!!! No! You dreadful person, how can anyone love you anymore, and everyone you meet will secretly be wanting to wear a gas mask because of your halitosis, and people will be sniggering behind your back. Actually - no one cares whether you brushed your teeth this morning or not. But the reality - that no one gives a damn about you is not at the root of all this. Because you have such low self-esteem, and because you have been programmed to be polite and not do things that might be considered weird, so you desperately seek the approval of people around you. But it goes much deeper than this. Since you no longer know who you are and do not possess the reassurance that would come from this self-knowledge, so you want external validation for your values, beliefs, ambitions, and even the

way you feel. And so you might ask whether life has a purpose. It is no longer enough to trust your instincts and desires; you need some external authority figure to tell you what the meaning of life is. There is no shortage of people willing to tell you the purpose of life - for a price - the same with how to live your life. Again, since your inner intuitions are buried under a ton of conditioning, so you can't even decide whether you want to spend the afternoon on the couch eating donuts, or whether you should go to the gym. This need for external validation and approval is nothing but voluntary slavery. We are like animals that have been caged all their life. When the doors of the cage are opened, the animals are fearful of leaving it. The doors of your cage are open - believe it or not. Find your purpose, follow your instincts and feelings; the universe itself has given you the freedom to do that. The only person that needs to validate and approve of the things you do - is you.

It requires a great deal of effort to realize that no amount of effort can bring satisfaction.

You can't get no satisfaction, even though you try, and you try, and you try. Well, I've got news for you - the harder you try, the less satisfied you will be. Maybe satisfaction is seen as endless sexual conquests - but it becomes tedious. The chat-up lines work every time, the slick manipulation works every time, and you are what an imbecile might call "good in bed." The central problem revolves around the fact that

pleasure is only experienced through differences. If every sexual partner is pretty much the same, it all becomes boring. So next time it has to be three in a bed, and then that becomes boring. And then ever more bizarre practices are called for to spice the whole thing up. No matter how hard you try you can't get no satisfaction - and here is the rub. The trying is the problem. Someone with a healthy appetite for sex will copulate when the desire is strong and feel some level of satisfaction afterward. But our sex-obsessed glutton isn't satisfied with that and goes chasing pleasure - big mistake.

Of course, it isn't just sex where people make great efforts to get some satisfaction. Look at the gourmet eater - lark's tongues in aspic become commonplace, and that five hundred dollar meal just an also-ran. If you really want to experience satisfaction fast for a week - and then eat a fifty-cent piece of bread - your imagination could not have anticipated such a pleasure. The same with sex - abstain for a month or two. The secret to satisfaction is in the not trying, and so you have to expend a great deal of effort to realize that no amount of effort can bring satisfaction.

The day after you die, the world will be pretty much identical with the day before you died. You are not the least bit important. Now isn't that a relief?

It's such a sad fact that no one will care about your death other than a handful of people who are close to you. Our craving for importance is a curse, although we nonetheless want to be important. By feeling and thinking we are important, we assign importance to our ambitions, plans, actions, and in the process, these ambitions, plans, and activities become "boss". They do not serve us - we serve them, and life becomes a striving to realize our importance through our plans and ambitions. The worst case of this behavior can be found in those whose self-importance has convinced them they should be famous. All ethical behavior, self-respect, and moderation go out the window, and it is not unknown for a person to destroy themselves in the process of chasing after fame. All of this can be cured through a simple remedy - the realization that the day after you die, the world will be pretty much identical with the day before you died. You and I, and even the most narcissistic, self-promoting, psychopath in the world will not affect the world through our death.

It's a beautiful and liberating thing to realize you are not the least bit important. Nothing you think, feel, or do, is important. So you can treat those things with the disrespect they deserve and drift through life without being

henpecked to death by those pesky ambitions, plans, and whatever other nonsense we conjure up because we think we are important. Now, isn't that a relief.

That we might one day know "the truth" is an outrageous lie.

Here we are trapped inside our sensory and conceptual prison, and we think we can know "the truth" - whatever that might be. It's a little like spending your life in a room with no windows and no access to the outside world and believing you can know what the world is without ever having seen it. You will, of course, construct an image of the world that is nothing more than a glorified image of the room you have been trapped in. In any case, what is this "truth" we are always chasing, and that religious folk tend to claim to possess? Generally speaking, it is a claim to know how the world was made, its moral statutes, the nature of the soul - the ultimate reality in other words. I don't think the universe knows anything about "truth" - it's a human thing. We have factual truths (the sky is blue), and we know logical truths (all humans die, Socrates was a human, Socrates died). Beyond these truths, we know nothing - and cannot know anything.

People who claim to know "the truth" should be viewed with suspicion. What they are claiming is certainty, and pretensions to certainty caused the Roman Catholic

Inquisition, Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany, and other abominations. The problem for human beings springs from the difficulty associated with saying and thinking, "I don't know." But pretensions to truth are insanity, and not knowing is sanity - choose sanity.

If you do not achieve your ambitions, you will be disappointed. If you do achieve your ambitions, you will be disappointed.

You set your heart on that promotion, and you didn't get it. Of course, you are disappointed; you already saw yourself bossing the plebeians, setting impossible targets so you could watch them sweat, and glowing in the ass-kissing. But now your rival has got the job, and you will have to do the ass-kissing, and sweat to meet impossible deadlines, and suck up the bullying. Those who struggle relentlessly to become famous through some sad little channel on YouTube, or believe their shallow novel will rival Dan Brown or other massively successful authors - they will be disappointed too. But maybe, just maybe, it is all worth it for those who do realize their ambitions. Well, I have some news for you there. Realizing dreams is every bit as disappointing as failing to achieve them - it's just that the successful do not admit it. And why should they? To become successful in business, the arts, society, or whatever, almost invariably means becoming a monster to achieve such - and a wretched monster too. I won't name

names, but think of some wildly successful people and look at them - freaks. The central problem in all of this is that we derive pleasure from constant increases in good fortune, and not from one-off hits. So you inherit a hundred thousand dollars, and you feel happy. But soon enough, you start to take it for granted, and you want a million dollars. Meanwhile, most of your life sucks, and the rush of pleasure from the initial gain has worn off - and you find yourself at the starting line once again. It's the same with fame. Maybe you become famous within your local county, and that's great, but it soon wears off, and you want national recognition. There is no place of satisfaction in all of this. The downside is that to achieve what is achieved has cost you so much - personal relationships, maybe your health, your personal integrity (if you had any in the first place). Rabid ambition is just plain bad, whether you achieve those ambitions or not. Best to moderate your ambitions and the best way to do this is to remember that you will never find satisfaction through them.

All respondents but one replied in the negative when asked whether they would create a planet populated by creatures that had to kill and eat each other to survive. The one detractor went by the name of God.

We take it for granted that on this beautiful blue and green planet of ours that things have to savage and eat each

other to continue surviving - the red doesn't show in satellite pics. And we should remind ourselves that the desire to survive is the strongest desire we have, and the one we dedicate most effort to satisfying. So when a lion is ripping open the abdomen of a gazelle while it is still alive, the survival drive of the gazelle is wholly overwhelmed, causing immeasurable suffering. It's a particularly cruel setup - an all-consuming desire to survive, and the certainty, for human beings at least, that all the effort is in vain - we die, that is a certainty. Animals have been spared this ability to anticipate their death; even so, millions of male chicks are processed through shredders every day while fully conscious, simply because they have no value in the poultry industry. The industrialization of animal rearing and slaughter has been one of humanity's greatest "achievements." In any case, nature does its own thing in parallel with that of human beings, and in that sense, we are just magnifying the awful reality of life on this planet - for one creature to live, it has to kill and consume maybe hundreds of other creatures. Very few human beings would want it this way - but God/Nature/existence/the universe - whatever word you want to use - clearly does.

Trying to be happy will make you miserable. Being okay with misery will make you happy.

EMOTIONS

What we are looking for is ourselves

You don't have to be particularly insightful to realize that most people are searching for something. Generally speaking, they believe the "something" that will satisfy is external - material things, travel (romantic materialism), relationships, spiritual quests. We tend to be like homeless children hoping that the next passerby, be it a new job, a new partner, more money, a new guru, will give us a home. It never happens since the thing we are all looking for is ourselves. From childhood to responsible age, life is a process of conditioning, and the most tragic outcome of this conditioning is that we forget who we are. Our ambitions, role models, societal programming, education, all take us away from what we are. So by the age of twenty, we have a person within us that has been fully formed by external influences - the person we are gets buried and lost. The result is that we can spend the rest of our lives looking for ourselves, and under mounds of conditioning, that is not easy. In any case, most people have so much invested in their phony self that they would find it

impossible to abandon it and embrace the homeless child looking for a home.

As far as emotional states are concerned, don't fix - feel.

There is a natural tendency, encouraged by our notion of what is "normal", to want to fix many of our emotional states. Envy, jealousy, anger, hatred, boredom, and many other so called "negative emotions" are painful to some extent and so there often arises the desire to fix them. The fix often involves alcohol, entertainment, drugs, sex, comfort eating, spiritual pursuits, and many other marvelous inventions of recent times such as Facebook. The best way to deal with painful emotions is not to try and fix them but to go into them. Since emotions are in the body, someone who is sensitive to their bodily states can put their attention on the emotion as it manifests in the body. Doing this avoids denial and harmful habits and has the effect of "absorbing" the emotion within a relatively short span of time without side-effects.

Ambition is always dangerous territory, but spiritual ambition - enlightenment, moksha, salvation, nirvana - is the most dangerous of all.

Ambition is derived from a sense of lack. There would be no motive to do anything unless there was a perceived

lack, and lack is always associated with pain. So ambition is an attempt to attain something in order to alleviate a pain - a sense of lack. In ordinary life the ambitions include the desire for more money, power, sensual pleasure, but in the domain of spiritual ambitions people are looking for some kind of liberation from their miserable state - obviously, or they would have no desire to try and attain a different state. Instead of addressing the real reasons for their misery those with spiritual ambitions seek an escape route, and because these states that are sought are fictionsYou , so those with spiritual ambitions become frustrated and bitter - although they would never admit it. Spiritual ambitions are the most dangerous of all ambitions.

You can always not care. And even if you do care you can "not care" that you care.

In any given situation that needs attention we can do something or ignore it. To be stuck between the two - to be fretting over it but doing nothing is a mugs game. When I talk about care I'm not talking about helping the people around us if they need help, but simply the habit of sweating over things that cannot be addressed or that we do not want to address. Developing the habit of not caring saves a great deal of wasted energy and the distraction that comes with it. So, for something like climate change we either do our bit or forget about it - no point giving attention to something where there will be no action. But

being human beings we invariably do end up caring about things, although even here we can choose to not care that we care. World affairs, the plight of people we come in contact with, and our own situation, can all produce circumstances where we are invited to care. It's a good habit to learn not to care - either about things or the fact that we care. Life becomes less burdensome and the world continues to go its own sweet way.

As long as we strive we will suffer.

Striving and effort derive from a sense of lack. This lack might be purely physical, such as the need for food, liquids, sex, warmth. Or it might be intellectual - a striving to understand something. In all cases the sense of lack is a pain, otherwise we would not be motivated to address the pain through effort. Even the striving for more pleasure is an attempt to move from less to greater satisfaction. As long as we suffer we will strive.

Attempts to change are acts of violence against oneself.

Where on earth did you get the idea that you needed to change? Maybe it was one of those awful parents you had, or a schoolteacher, or maybe your "mates", and perhaps even that person you fancied but who played hard-to-get. Well, drop the idea of changing yourself; you are fine as you are. In any case, the people who would have us

improve only want us to do so for their benefit - to serve their purposes - why else would they want it. To change yourself to accommodate other people is an act of violence toward yourself. The problem often goes a bit deeper in that we might have had total bastards for parents who were always telling us to be smarter, more productive, not so lazy, more polite, and that we were a bad boy or girl. That stuff sticks, and when we get older, the bastard voice is still making itself heard in our head. All we can do is become aware of it and tell it politely to go fuck itself.

Hope is the destroyer of inner peace.

If you hope you also fear, and fear is the mind killer. The doubt that accompanies hope will eat you from the inside. Abandon your hopes and know peace.

Freedom is first and foremost freedom from oneself.

You like red roses, and seeing as it's your birthday, your partner has ordered six red roses. But when delivered, they are white - boo-hoo-hoo. You are so disappointed - it ruins your whole birthday, and you become the demon from hell for the next two days. After all, the entire world should pay due deference to you on your birthday, and those idiots at the florist got it all wrong. A step back. White roses are in no way inferior to red roses - looked at objectively. The problem is with you. Maybe when you were a child,

mummy always made sure you got exactly what you wanted - and if she didn't, you'd poke her in the eye. But now there is no one you can poke in the eye, and so you sulk for two days. People talk glibly about freedom, but the only freedom worth having is freedom from oneself - from one's acquired preferences, beliefs, opinions, ideologies, biases. If we are like a big stubborn lump of rock, lots of things are going to crash into us, and some will be bigger than we are. Better to drop all the conditioning (easier said than done) and let life go the way it goes with minimal resistance on our part. Only a person who is free of themselves can acquiesce to reality.

Denial of futility and emptiness is more painful than their acceptance.

Better keep busy because the bogeyman might get you if you rest for five minutes. Your busyness is like a skater on thin ice - to stop might result in you sinking into a bottomless pit of black, cold water - the realization of the apparent futility and emptiness of life. I say "apparent" because having told ourselves fairy stories about the big daddy in the sky, how our lives have a purpose, how tomorrow will be better than today, we automatically set up the opposites. You cannot think of black without automatically thinking of white. And so we cling on to the pretty stuff - meaning, purpose, self-importance, progress - and we studiously avoid their opposites - meaninglessness,

purposelessness, insignificance and degeneracy. So if you are going to believe that life has meaning and significance, it would be as well to accept the opposites of futility and emptiness, and this way, the bogeyman doesn't get a look in. Better than this however would be to throw ideas such as meaning and purpose into the trash can - they are human inventions dreamed up in an attempt to make life look prettier.

Saying "yes" to your being is the fastest way to exorcise your suffering.

Our suffering is our most precious asset. With it, we can evoke sympathy from others and protest against life with the knowledge that we are fully justified. Of course, the people on the receiving end of your whining wish you'd shut the fuck up, but being polite, they gesture appropriately at the right moments and make for the door as soon as they can - "oh gosh, is it that time already?". For most people, their suffering provides a familiar, comfortable place to rest, and they can feed on the sickly-sweet poison of their resentment. To say "yes" to one's existence, to one's desires and instincts, is incompatible with a festering pile of suffering. But here is the rub - resentment and hatred feed much more successfully on a person's inner world than they do on the outer world. You useless piece of shit, how many times have you tried to diet and failed? Why are you such an embarrassment? Who could love a person like you? These are the wages earned

from saying "no" to one's desires and instincts - to one's existence. Say "yes," and the cockroaches of self-hatred and inner resentment emerge from every corner and crevice and flee as quickly as they can in search of a new host.

If you want greater contentment and inner peace, you have to buy a one-way ticket into hell – your inner hell.

By the time you reach adulthood, your inner world is likely to resemble a pile of rotting garbage. It will be comprised of various ideas and behaviors imposed on you by the outside world - many of them contradictory, and almost all of them opposed to your real nature. When most people feel they need some inner peace, they go on meditation retreats - precisely the opposite direction they should be traveling. Spiritual workshops and meditation retreats are palliative. In keeping with big-pharma's lucrative strategy of developing drugs that treat symptoms instead of curing, so the self-help and spiritual industries delight in treating symptoms. If you want inner peace, you have to wrestle with demons - your demons. And what might these demons be? The million and one directives you ingested from the environment that make you feel bad - be industrious, be smart, make mommy happy, be polite, impress the neighbors - and many other notions that have a single root - our need for external approval.

In so-called spiritual pursuits, there are a thousand and one things that do not work and absolutely nothing that does work.

What does this word "spiritual" mean anyway? The definitions seem to be circular - "of the spirit." Well, what is spirit? It's spiritual. In any case, the chakra cleansing, the morning gratitudes, the revelations of the teacher, the hours of meditation - none of it seems to work, if by "work" we mean brings about a sense of contentment and peace. If it worked, we'd all be doing it, but the thousand and one things that we all try, prove to be utterly useless when it comes to curing our neuroses and pains.

There would be no market for the thousand and one things if people were already happy. The fact they are not points at causes deeper than the ones a chakra cleanse might address - it might be that people's lives are all fucked up - too much anxiety, too many things to worry about, crappy relationships, a set of values that has no value. No, I don't think a chakra cleanse will address any of those things. Play with the thousand and one spiritual things by all means, but don't expect for a minute; it will change your miserable life - stronger medicines are required to do that, the first one being the realization of the folly of trying to change things.

You should know that romantic love almost always turns to hate. So be wary of love.

There are different degrees of love. At its most trivial, someone might proclaim that they love ice cream, or maybe they love surfing. This kind of statement gives us a clue to the nature of love - it is the experience of pleasure. Lovers are a mutual source of pleasure, and one of the most profound types of love is that of a mother for her child. It's easy to love something that brings pleasure and impossible to love something that is a pure source of pain. Romantic love is perhaps the most disfigured form of love. There is usually a mutual preening - a mutual flattering that takes place in romantic love. This flattery is obviously a source of great pleasure and is taken further when each sees the fulfillment of all their dreams in the other. But guess what? These projections of perfection onto the other person are bound to come undone, and when they do there will be pain. And so the process of unwinding expectations begins, and with it there is likely to be a growing sense of resentment and possibly hatred for the person who only a short while ago was the embodiment of perfection. It's this precipitous drop that causes the pain - from the height of ecstasy to the depths of disappointment. So you should be wary of romantic love, it has a nasty habit of turning into hate.

Trying to be happy will make you miserable. Being okay with misery will make you happy.

There is nothing more pathetic than someone who is striving to be happy. More than anything, it is a statement they are miserable and believe that by doing something or acquiring something they can become happy. If a person is unhappy no amount of doing and getting will make things better - it will make them worse. There might be a few moments of pleasure when taking the delivery of that super-duper auto that will take five years to pay off, but generally speaking, trying to be happy will make you miserable. And then there is the obvious question - what is wrong with misery? Oh sure, mummy and daddy told you not to be miserable, but fuck them. More generally, society operates on the basis that no matter how much pain we are in, we should always look on the bright side (of death). Well, fuck society too. Misery is a perfectly acceptable state, and the more you resist it, the more it will persist. So indulge in your misery - wallow in it, decorate it with ribbons, and feed it on caviar. Try to find things that will make you more miserable - feed it. The inevitable outcome of pampering your misery is that you will become happy, although we should never, ever make efforts to be happy - the striving will make you miserable.

If you trample all over your desires and instincts there will only be one outcome - resentment.

It's not like we are a blank sheet when we are born. Baby wants food, warmth, contact with mother, and it will poke her in the eye if it doesn't get these things. So we have desires and instincts, the most basic of which revolve around survival and procreation. As a result, food and sex are essential to most people over the age of eighteen say. But there are other desires - for power and fame, sensual pleasure, and if these desires are denied some expression, we get very resentful. It isn't uncommon to find someone resentful of the spontaneous manifestation of children simply because they might have been denied such expression when they were young, and are incapable of it in later life. And yet, spontaneity is often just a direct manifestation of a desire. The miser, someone who has denied themselves pleasure all their life, will resent seeing others indulge in pleasures. But this resentment can be turned inwards. Most people have some form of self-resentment. Maybe they dislike themselves when they are frivolous, or when they indulge in some level of excitement. The moral of the story is simple - if you trample all over your desires and instincts, you will resent your behavior and that of others.

Putting others down is the most popular way of lifting oneself up.

There's nothing more gratifying than asserting your superiority over someone else. It's the instant pick-me-up, and works on the principle that if others are weaker, you are stronger. The put-downs don't have to be particularly aggressive or explicit. "You looked better when you were slimmer." "Shame you didn't get that promotion." "That old auto of yours has served you very well." "Are you still trying to get fitter?" In all of these, there has to be the implicit message that things are somewhat better for you. So the quip about the old auto is best made when you have just taken delivery of a shiny, top-of-the-range, luxury auto. The timing is essential, but most people know how to do it instinctively anyway.

You see, it's all about power and changes of power. When other people are strong, and particularly when they display it, you will quite naturally feel a bit diminished. If everyone in your street has a new auto and you are still running around in an old banger, you will unavoidably feel disempowered. The same "old banger" would not be an issue if it was old bangers all the way down the street. These dynamics being the case, you can see how any opportunity to bring others down is going to be a lift for you.

The only alternative to this vicious little game is not to give a fuck - but that is a very, very, rare thing. To not give a fuck means you desire no approval from others around you. We can pretend we don't care, but that's worse than caring. To really not care is something that has to be earned, and most will not pay the price.

A fly will find dog shit beautiful. Human beings tend to find it repulsive. It all depends on whether a thing enhances or diminishes your well-being - that's all beauty and ugliness are.

There is no mystery surrounding what is beautiful and what is ugly. Beautiful things tend to be life-enhancing - they demonstrate power in some way. Ugly things are just the opposite - they potentially threaten the life force, and so are shunned. The perfectly formed flower is symbolic of the life force in action - it advertises its seeds, and as such, is partly sexual - it epitomizes the life force, and as such, we see it as beautiful. Contrast this with a wilting flower, the petals turning brown. No one would buy dying flowers, they have a smell of death about them, and so we see them as ugly. All of this depends on an item's relationship to the observer. Decaying flowers may look oh so beautiful and tasty to some types of insects - the healthy flowers, not so much. The night sky might be seen as beautiful - it is a display of power and might invoke all manner of emotions, including that of a sense of beauty. Dead, deformed

fetuses are seen as ugly by most people - they represent death. Beauty and ugliness are superficial things really, and the notion that "beauty is truth" is as wrong as anything could be - ugliness might be nearer to the truth.

Fuck you - I'm happier than you and my world is better than your world.

SOCIETY

When I am stronger, you are weaker. When I am weaker, you are stronger. This is the law of the beast.

If you understand these dynamics, you know pretty much everything you need to understand about most social interactions and life on this planet. The only people who want to see you stronger are those who rely on your strength - everyone else either doesn't care or would take some pleasure from seeing your power diminished. People in a competitive position would be the most likely suspects for wanting to see your power diminished - coworkers, rivals for a mate, competitive neighbors. We are involved in a struggle for existence, and so your weakness means you are less capable of acquiring the resources you need and this creates an opportunity for others to get what they need. Of course, the opposite applies. Those people you secretly hate would be diminished if your power was increased, and they would probably feel it. So let's be specific about power. Maybe it's money, and you inherit enough to buy yourself a luxury vehicle. Your power has been enhanced, and your neighbors will be spitting blood.

Or maybe you become famous for something you have done in your local community. Others who also crave fame will hate you. This is the law of the beast and there is no denying its operation in many areas of life. In more ruthless times, it may well have been the case that those who compete with you for resources would have seen your weakness as an opportunity to attack. These dynamics even apply to "polite" company, with all the posturing and bragging. If you bear this little rule in mind, most of the behavior you observe around you will be easily understood.

Fuck you - I'm happier than you and my world is better than your world.

Thus spoke the Facebook narcissist busy posting pictures of themselves with the miserable old git they married fifteen years ago. In the pics the Facebook narcissist and the miserable old git look rapturously happy, as they pose at the table in an upmarket restaurant to celebrate 15 years of misery together. Meanwhile the waiters, tired of taking Facebook pics, secretly spit in their soup. Fuck you, their world is better than yours. Even before the meal is finished the Facebook narcissist is posting pics on Facebook and Instagram, while the miserable old git looks on with contempt. But it won't be long before they are vacationing, and the miserable old git is already dreading the endless posing that will be demanded. Here we are, having a much

better time than you, says the Facebook narcissist, as a picture is posted of the two of them by the pool with their newly served cocktails. The miserable old git hates cocktails - but the Facebook narcissist insists they hold them up like a trophy and feign an expression of shameless ecstasy. Fuck you, their world is better than yours.

Other people's misery gives you pleasure.

You secretly like those programs about the homeless, about people with odd medical conditions, the destitute, the starving - you wouldn't watch them if there wasn't some secret pleasure involved. When others are weaker your are stronger - it's the law of the beast. Go on - admit you feel all secure and snuggly in your comfy home when you see pictures of people lay in doorways sleeping under sheets of cardboard. Of course, it would only be polite to express some concern, but your phony concern doesn't go deep enough for you to put your hand in your pocket, or God forbid, offer to help one of these unfortunates yourself. No, the unfortunates are good TV entertainment, and if the poor and dispossessed have been made scapegoats in your country, you may even want to see harm come to these people. Your fascination with other people's suffering is a primitive instinct - it makes you feel stronger because others are weaker, and it reassures you that all those bad things are happening somewhere else - until they're not.

Without courage - nothing.

The benefits of pessimism are numerous but they don't come without a price. If we are going to deal with reality we need to become acquainted with it, and that isn't always pretty. Unless a person has the courage to stare reality in the face, with all its cruelty and apparent futility then they will not have the knowledge to deal with life as it really is, and may just fall back on the fantasies of the optimist. It isn't enough to simply think about the nature of life, we have to understand it in the depths of us. But the strange thing is, that the more we contemplate on the barbarity and meaninglessness of life so it becomes less offensive, less threatening, and the more we can get on with living a pessimistic life. We have, in effect, exorcised the bogeyman - the facts that most people dare not acknowledge lest they should knock them down from their precarious perch of optimism. The courage we are talking of here is not all that common, and so the pessimistic way of life will always be for the minority.

If life is driven by deceit and lies (which it surely is), what is the value of truth?

Lying is systemic - we can't help it. "I've had no problems at all with her - she's a lovely motor.", says the man selling his wreck of a motor car to an unsuspecting buyer. "This has been a lovely home - so solid and nurturing.", says the

woman telling prospective buyers of the house that is about to have mining tunnels running underneath it. "Yes, I have lots of experience in just-in-time manufacturing.", says the job interviewee who doesn't even know what the phrase "just-in-time" means. Nature lies too - the angler fish with its little dangly thing that wiggles about just above its gaping mouth, luring smaller fish who think the dangly thing is food - only to be gulped down by the grotesquely looking angler fish. Or the venus-fly-trap that lures insects into its trap with a sweet-tasting nectar, or the invisible spider's web, or the moths that look like wood bark so predators can't see them. Deception, disguise, and outright lies wherever you look. Sales and marketing departments employ professional liars, and business is the art of making money out of lying. But all of these things serve one end - survival. The lie is the engine of survival, and in life, it is indispensable.

So does truth have any value at all? It has limited value in life, although we have laws and legal constructs such as guarantees and warranties, so our lying doesn't get out-of-hand. Even so - the lie is pervasive in all aspects of life - even the most personal and intimate. Truth is only of value in your inner world. People whose inner lives are infected with widespread lying either go insane or are very unhappy. Of course, people do lie to themselves - pretending to be enthusiastic when they are not, pretending to be calm when they are like a boiling cauldron inside. But most people do have at least a

smidgen of inner honesty. There is a stark contrast between the value of the lie in life and within oneself. In life, it is essential; within oneself, it is poison, and only a person with inner honesty has any chance of inner peace.

Definition of a new age person - someone who is generally ignorant of science and philosophy, but is happy to proclaim with certainty on the most difficult questions.

It could well be that the new-age movement has done more to damage the general intelligence of the human race than anything else in its history (except religion). Human beings dislike the uncertainty of not knowing, so they invent all kinds of clap-trap to relieve themselves of the tension. But there is another, darker-motive behind the superstitions and pseudo-science characteristic of the new-age movement. New age people want stuff - material stuff, money, good health, sensory titillation, wild experiences, relief from worry - and so on. For these reasons, "The Secret" (think of something, and it will happen - for those unfamiliar) found fertile ground among the new-age community. So it is precisely those people who want stuff the most who are keenest to latch on to any old nonsense that promises the goodies without any effort whatsoever on their part. Not only do new-age people have all the answers, but it seems they also represent the more grasping segment of the population.

Don't tell your "friends" of your good fortune - they'll hate you for it.

Envy and resentment make the world go round. If we could see the secret resentments people wrap in pink ribbons, and do their best to disguise, the world would look unbearably ugly. The most extreme form of this behavior is schadenfreude - delight in other people's misfortune. So, if you have a bit of a win on the lottery, don't tell anyone - they will hate you and be solicitous at the same time - even Satan himself can't bear to see such behavior. The reason people flinch at the good fortune of others is simple enough to understand. Since the world, and specifically, human life, is a competition for resources, you might see someone else's good fortune as a threat - they suddenly have more resources and power than you do. Remember - when you are weaker, others are stronger, and when you are stronger, others are weaker. This rule is the law of the beast - and we are all beasts under the polite manners and charming exterior.

But this is just the tip of the "resentment" iceberg. It doesn't do to display your happiness either if, indeed, you are happy - people will hate you for that too. The majority of people are bitter and resentful because they believed in life and life crapped all over them. So any display of power (and happiness is a power) will probably be met with inner resentment - how dare you be happy?

Even the most refined emotions expressed in polite company are nothing more than attempts to dominate, dismiss, boast, and achieve some level of superiority.

It's quite well known that the more a person dislikes you, the more effusive they will be with their greetings - loud proclamations, painted smiles, aggressive handshakes, over attentiveness. But this is just the stuff of "normal" social interaction - and what is that saying? Most socializing is just a power play - look at what I've got or have done, it's much better than what you've got or done. I can't be alone in having to listen to "friends" blabbing about their vacation to Peru, and how fucking wonderful the whole thing was, how it was life-changing, and all this while they play Peruvian pan-pipe music in the background. They have been transformed in a way you cannot possibly be. And don't let's restrict this behavior to the desperate professional classes who have everything other than happiness, oh no, we can include those new-age seekers in this too. A genuine social exchange where each party wishes the other well and wants to hear what they have to say is rarer than the proverbial rocking horse shit. You may never encounter it. Everyone wants to talk and boast, and no one wants to listen.

If you don't want your " friends" to think you are a weirdo then for fucks sake don't try and say anything even remotely intelligent - like, "you are going to die".

Some advice: when chatting with your mates, you will be on safe ground if you restrict your conversation to topics such as fashion, travel, home improvement, football, work, motor cars, cosmetics, breast implants, bone cancer, animal slaughter, death ... Oops, got a bit carried away there - cross out the last three. I guess you already know that people are in deep denial about the realities of life, and they will not thank you for reminding them. So polite social conversation should always be centered around trivial issues - Justin Bieber's new hairstyle, a new rejuvenating face cream, your holiday pics, beer, your latest restaurant discovery, that person you both know whose partner is cheating on them - and so on. You will lose "friends" very quickly if you talk about anything real - it will scare the shit out of them, and they will hate you for it. You will be labeled weirdo, and in former times you would have been burned at the stake. Today you will just be socially isolated, and if you are injured in a traffic accident, no one will come to your aid, and your doctor will over-prescribe your medicines to put you out of your misery. Who knows, society might just create special places for people like you who want to deal with reality - far away from a general population busy indulging their narcissism on Facebook, watching porno, taking their antidepressants and anxiety

medication, deep in resentment and sadness, but optimistic about the future all the same because someone told them to be - and above all they wouldn't want to be weird.

What do you want? Whatever it is, it will be making you miserable.

You've been programmed to want stuff; after all, if you didn't want stuff, there would be no engine to fuel the economy. The problem is that wanting stuff is a feeling of lack, and it isn't as if we want a few simple things - we want lots of things - better motor, a bigger house, smarter phone, more "friends" on Facebook, more sexual partners, more money, more fame, more excitement. No wonder we feel empty inside. With all that wanting, the feeling of lack that goes with it is going to be quite palpable. So it might be useful to do a little bit of introspecting and take stock of what you want -the things you believe will make your life better because this wanting will be making you miserable. Worse still, if you are a spiritual person, your wants may be even more severe - enlightenment, bliss, peace, moksha, and so your misery will be all that more profound. Unfortunately, we are bombarded with messages every day that tell us what to want, and the people behind these messages are smart - they know what will get you drooling. So we have to be equally sharp. We have to understand ourselves and the world and figure out how we are being

manipulated. Or we can join the crowd climbing over each other on Black Friday to get that discounted TV - oh, did you trample someone to death in the process - not to worry at least you got the TV so you can flick through eight hundred channels, every one of them crap.

If you are unhappy, it is because your most treasured values have no value. At a societal level, people are unhappy because the values of society have no value.

Our values are all fucked up - individually and those of society. Most of the values we have will have been adopted - taken from the primary influencers in our life - parents, teachers, maybe peers, religion, self-help nonsense - and so on. There is an excellent chance that none of these values in any way reflect our preferences and desires. You might have had the mantra of "hard work brings success" drilled into you as a child, but not feel the least bit inclined to work hard. In many societies, it is quite okay to work for a few weeks, planting a crop, harvesting, or whatever, and then spend a couple of months loafing around. In any case, the person that has swallowed the "work hard" mantra may be unhappy because it is not the least bit in tune with their real desires. And so we have millions of people behaving in ways and adopting values that are alien to their real nature. As for society as a whole - well, we could be considering a lunatic asylum. Optimism is the great cancer, the value set that drives people on to destroy themselves for the sake of

a few trinkets - a nicer car, a larger home, a better smartphone. Little wonder that one in sixteen people in the west is on antidepressants or anxiety medication. If you want to be happy, you have to create your own value set - consciously. Unless it is a conscious act, the creeping cancer of societal values, or of those around you who want to influence you will take hold, and you will join the millions of others who live a miserable life that is alien to their real nature.

Self-importance and misery go hand-in-hand.

Yes - you are a very important person. The way you look is important, what you say is important, how much you own is important, the people you know are important, what you think, feel and do are important, and even the way you take a dump is important. Now, when you were a child, and happy, you had no real notion of importance. You were glad to play in mud, show yours if the other showed theirs, stare at clouds for half an hour, and do nasty little things to the neighbor's cat. But now everything is a burden and designed not to please yourself, but others. The way you look is an attempt to impress other people, as is the way you talk, the way you walk, how you eat, where you eat, and even the strenuous efforts to suck in a fart when its release would be greeted with disapproval. You poor thing weighed down with considerations of what other people will think - no wonder you are miserable. But hey, your misery can be alleviated for a few minutes at least if you

buy that twenty-four carrot gold, diamond-encrusted, oh so swanky watch you saw in that magazine for important people. What was it called now - oh yes, “How To Piss People Off”. At least you know that you are making yourself miserable for a good reason when you can piss others off with your new swanky watch. Isn't that why you bought it?

Yesterday I read twenty wise sayings. Today I have forgotten them all.

Let me invent a few memes - you know the sort that appears on Facebook - posted by people who want to impress you with their righteousness. Here goes - "In the depths of your despair, love will flower." Or how about - "As you shower the world with your love, so you will be showered with love." I think you might agree that the last one is the most offensive, and hopefully they are not referring to “Golden Showers”. Who do these people think they are? They make the fatal mistake of thinking that the world wants their sickly sweet "love" - narcissistic self-adulation more like. In any case, if you are into this kind of thing you might read a hundred of these every day, each providing just a minute or so of self-preening pleasure. But then you forget them and go back to spitting venom at the neighbor who has just won on the lottery. It doesn't matter how wise (or otherwise) the sayings are; you will forget all of them in the same way you will forget what you read on your packet of breakfast cereals in the morning. We could

aspire to more sophisticated memes - ones that sound like they come from a zen teacher. How about - "empty your mind and be filled with the world." - or other similar bullshit. Some people even compete on the level of the exclusiveness of their memes, quoting from Buddhist scriptures or Sanskrit texts. The underlying assumption here is that if it is old, it must be profound. Either way, no matter how exclusive the memes, they will all be forgotten within ten minutes of reading them.

No one is more dangerous than someone who has found God.

This one hardly needs any explanation. Millions have died in the name of religion, and the person who has found God is usually convinced of the certainty of their claim - and there is nothing more dangerous than certainty. Someone who is certain will not meet half-way, or agree to disagree, they will want to press their claim until the end, and that end may be war or murder. In reality, it is not only people who have found God; it is anyone who makes their claims with certainty that should be avoided. Human beings are in no position to acquire absolute knowledge - knowledge of the ultimate reality behind the fact there is something rather than nothing. But the low tolerance most people have for not knowing means they will be attracted to certainty like a moth to a flame, and there are plenty of people selling certainty - for a price.

Order is Death

You must have seen those features in glossy magazines showing someone sat in an unbelievably neat, sterile lounge trying to portray a picture of worldly bliss. Typically it shows a woman reading some moronic magazine; since having got the perfectly ordered domestic setup, that is all that is left. What it doesn't show, of course, is the striving, cheating, and desperate ambition to acquire such boredom - since a perfectly ordered life is a boring life. When you take it to the extreme, order is death. In a perfectly ordered environment, nothing new can happen - how could it? For something new, there has to be a break with the existing order. This principle not only applies to naive dreams of perfect materialistic orderliness, but most organizations can commit suicide by striving for perfect order. The completely efficient business does not have room for change - the change would disrupt its efficiency. At the time of writing, it would seem that the German automobile industry is suffering from the "order is death" syndrome. Being perfectly efficient, it had no room to accommodate the rapidly growing market for electric vehicles - and cheating on exhaust fumes doesn't help either. If you want to know death, then get your life organized to the last minute - a living death is guaranteed.

Nothing serves as well as obscurity to make shallowness look profound.

How to become a spiritual guru in one easy move - write some obscure texts. That's it. There is a large class of people who believe that anything ancient or mysterious must be right. To make your texts obscure, all you need do is talk in terms of allegory and metaphor - the seekers of the extraordinary will love it. So instead of saying "water flows downhill," you can say "the great invisible substance flows from the higher regions to the lower regions." Fans of this kind of material can have a wonderful time with it. "The great invisible substance" becomes spirit - or some other nonsense. The "higher regions" and the "lower region" become states of being. And with a bit of wiseacring, this could all be interpreted as those possessed of the great invisible substance move from the high regions of spiritual awareness to the lower regions in the act of benevolence. That should keep their desperate little egos happy for a while. Numerous modern authors have done very well from obscurity, and have become particularly adept at bastardizing science as part of their cause. Such terms as "quantum healing", "quantum consciousness", "multidimensional awareness", are routinely used to give the impression of scientific legitimacy. But the bullseye is to discover obscure ancient texts, which might have meant something in their day (and equally might not have), and create some mysterious cult out of them. It is usually the

case that the more obscure something is, the more shallow it is. As Einstein said - if you can't explain something simply, you don't understand it well enough. Happily, we are blessed with a rational mind, that when put to task, it can ferret out bluster and bullshit. However, for those too lazy to use their rational mind, obscurity will continue to make shallowness look profound.

Perfection is total acceptance of the fact that you are a chaotic, fucked up, mess.

There is a contradiction here - but it can't be helped. In conventional terms, a "chaotic, fucked up, mess" is not perfection. Let's drop the convention. If you happened to be the only human being on planet Earth, it seems very unlikely that you would evaluate or judge yourself at all. What would you be comparing yourself with? - and that is the nub of it. We only think we are aberrant or lacking in some way when we compare ourselves with others like ourselves. You wouldn't compare yourself with a hamster unless you were in a very objective sense truly fucked up. You will compare yourself with those around you - peers, coworkers, family.

The central problem is that the comparisons are thrust upon us through advertising, social media, peer group comments, family poisons. Oh yes - family is the worst of the lot. It doesn't matter how skilled your parents are; they

will fuck you up. Either you will do everything wrong, or every time you tie your shoelaces, you will be applauded for being so talented. The result is that you either think you are a useless piece of shit or that the sun shines out of your rear-end - respectively - either way, you are fucked up.

There is a way out fo this labyrinth. Just accept that you are a chaotic, fucked up mess - really accept it. Life can create nothing else but chaotic, fucked up, messes - to be such is normal. And there lies your perfection - total acceptance of what you are. It may be that your fuckedupness is different from others around you - but that doesn't matter. If they think your fuckedupness is in some way inferior to theirs, tell them, ever so politely, to go fuck themselves.

Pretending to listen, to be interested when I don't want to listen, and when nothing is interesting - that is hell itself.

Here is the reality of much social interaction - you are boring someone, or they are boring you. You don't want to listen to the nonsense of others, and others do not want to listen to your nonsense. Even so, we socialize because we are social animals - well, most people are. Those who are not are blessed indeed. But it's considered polite to feign an expression of interest, to laugh on cue, to respond appropriately. The big problem is that social norms dictate the issues that can be discussed, and nearly all of them are

tedious - home, sport, fashion - whatever. We all play the game because we don't want to appear weird. Ultimately it's pretty much all boring. As a result, we pay the price - all the phony interest, phony smiles, fake everything, is all draining. We find ourselves in hell itself - a place where everything is phony, and nothing is real and spontaneous. Not all social interaction is like this, but the chattering classes suffer the most. They want to chatter and typically do not want to listen - some sympathy is needed. Their self-esteem is based on how many chattering parties they can go to, the level of triviality they can attain, and ultimately how much they can boast - albeit ever so politely. Satan himself left his habitation on planet Earth because of this - even he cannot bear to listen to the tedious crap most people come out with in their attempts to gain oneupmanship.

Resentment makes the world go round.

It may not be immediately apparent, but resentment drives much of the activity in the world, and even sets the moral tone. Resentment is easy to understand - when someone displays more power than you, you may resent them. After all, you want that power - money, status, fame, possessions, and if you can't get them, then resentment is almost a dead certainty. Nietzsche was huge on the whole thing of resentment and even claimed that it shaped our morality. The powerful can afford to be complacent, but the underdog becomes devious and a master of lying and

cheating. Since the underdogs resent the powerful, they create a value set that negates the claims of the powerful. A good example is the Christian church with its humility, charity, chastity, modesty - all directly opposed to the power possessors of the day. But the craft and scheming of the church eventually won out, and so its value set was adopted (by everyone other than the church it would seem).

Resentful people will try harder and become more devious to achieve what they want. Resentment is the ultimate motivator, and it is also an extremely destructive force. It is not uncommon to find people who have lived frugally, for example, to be resentful of those who do not. Any censoring of our instincts and desires will result in resentment toward those who do not censor. Parents who have censored their natural spontaneity will resent children who do not.

In many western countries today, we find people weighed down with duty and responsibility. Their work is unrewarding; they live a timetabled life - they are slaves. As a result, we see a set of moral values that is centered on productivity, optimism, effort, and those who do not conform are today's "sinners" - the unemployed and sick. And so it is clear to see that resentment will always make the world go round, even though the values that come from resentment are forever changing.

The universe is amoral, knowing neither good nor evil. Morality is a human affair and is always defined by the power possessors.

Religions would have it that there are absolutes of good and evil. Most people grow up with some level of religious or societal input to their notions of good and evil, and these become very deep-rooted. Take theft; for example - every religion has something to say about the immorality of theft. But let's assume you are starving, and you "steal" some bread from the bakery. It happens to save your life and allows you to help some other people. Was the theft wrong in that circumstance? Where do we draw the line? Is the artificial price hiking of drugs that save lives a form of theft? When we look around us, it would seem that the universe is amoral - the notion of morality is nowhere to be found. The world does have laws - you cannot walk through a wall, for example, but Stalin could massacre twenty million people. So clearly, the laws of the universe do not prohibit massacre. The notion of morality is a purely human affair - nature knows nothing of the concept. Without legislation to guide behavior and deter through punishment, we would have murder, rape, theft, and any other kind of violence occurring as an everyday affair. The resulting laws in a society tend to be reflected in the dominant morality. Since it is the power-possessors of the day who determine the law, so they also determine

morality. We live in an amoral universe, but morality is a tool that is used to establish some measure of order in society.

By saying something is beautiful you instantly kill its beauty.

It was William Blake who suggested we "kiss a joy as it flies " - if we don't want to destroy it. The very moment we conceptualize an experience we kill it. Isn't it enough to experience beauty without trying to capture it in the fetid bird nets of conceptualized thoughts? Unfortunately the fetid bird nets are proliferating, mainly in the form of social media. It isn't enough to experience a tasty meal, we now have to post photos of the dishes on Facebook or Instagram - the pleasure of the meal is forgotten in the desperate desire to gain approval from others - that is where the pleasure has now become located. Neither is it enough to see some attractive vista - we kill it by taking photographs and posting on social media, boring everyone who claims to be a friend, but is actually a fellow braggadocio. The pleasures get lost and our attention moves to the anticipation of hundreds of likes on social platforms specifically designed for narcissists. Children are gifted with the ability to simply experience pleasures without trying to capture them - for now at least anyway. But the poison of social media will invade even their

innocent little lives - and when it does, as it surely will, something very precious will have been lost.

The people who would sell you "free will" are the very ones who want to condemn you.

The question of whether you have free will or not hinges on your attitude to cause and effect. If you see no evidence for cause and effect (kick a ball, and it moves, for example), then you can believe whatever you wish - kick a ball, and it stays where it is maybe. If, however, you are not delusional and see plenty of evidence for cause and effect, then two more options are available. Either you believe that human beings are as much a part of the universe as anything else and as such subject to causality, or you think that the world made a special exemption for human beings, and we operate according to different laws. If you accept the first case, that we are an integral part of the universe, then you cannot believe in free will - we are determined to act in the same way anything else is. In other words, everything we do has a cause. However, if you think we are somehow separate from the rest of the world, then you can believe in whatever you wish - including free will. It has been stated very nicely by a few people (including Einstein) as "you can go what you want, but you cannot want what you want."

Having said all this, if we have no free will, then neither can there be any praise or blame - we do what we do because

it was the only thing we were ever going to do. The Church was very keen for us to believe that we had free will. In this way, we could be labeled "sinners" and live our lives under a cloud of blame. Now and then it would pick someone who was not a sinner and call them a saint - the ones who were praised. The only people who would be keen to promote the idea of free will are those who get a kick from apportioning blame to others and putting people like themselves on a pedestal of praise.

It might all be illusion and lies but the illusion and lies exist. Existence itself is the only truth.

IGNORANCE IS BLISS

Be silent you know nothing.

Here we are trapped inside our senses and thought structures, and we flatter ourselves that we can know "reality" or "the truth". The fact that our brain constructs our so-called reality seems to be generally overlooked - and there is no way out of the simulation it creates. Even space and time are constructs of our mind, as are cause and effect and the fact we see the world comprised of objects. And as far as truth is concerned, it should already be apparent that we cannot know absolute truths if we cannot know reality. The sciences are merely a study of how our minds represent reality - a survey of our simulation. This doesn't detract from the fact that we can know a great deal about the simulation itself - I know how to tie my shoelaces, for example - but knowledge beyond my senses and mental structures is impossible. So - be silent, you know nothing (that matters).

Emptiness is full of possibilities. Fullness is empty of possibility.

It's like one of those cute "zen" type statements - the kind that sounds profound but means absolutely nothing. But this one does say something. Have you ever noticed that people who might be classed as "know-it-alls" are generally the most unhelpful option to turn to when we need some hard facts? The problem with "know-it-alls" is that since they already know everything, they never actually learn anything, and so their bullshit and bluster is just that - and it's wholly useless. People who consider themselves experts have no room for anything new - they're already full of nonsense. This cute "zen" type statement is particularly applicable to people who think they have the world and their existence all sorted out. The fact we can know nothing of real substance seems to have been unnoticed by them. So when the world doesn't behave according to their understanding, they get grumpy and resentful - and utterly incapable of learning from experience. To be inwardly empty is unbearable for most people, and so they fill themselves with all kinds of bullshit. But for someone who can live with an awareness of their total ignorance, there is plenty of room for new information. The problem is that nature "abhors a vacuum." and since we are a part of life, we behave the same way. It requires a conscious effort to remain empty and not let our inner state be filled with all

kinds of nonsense. The payoff is that life becomes more spontaneous and exciting - emptiness is full of possibilities.

I once knew a man who meditated for two hours every day over thirty years. I asked him what he had achieved. "Nothing - it was a complete success. "- he replied.

Meditation isn't a wholly futile activity, but to do it with the expectation of turning your miserable, meaningless life into a perfect rose garden is delusional. It has been said by many zen teachers (real ones, not the ones selling you images of a perfectly calm life) that to meditate to achieve something is just a waste of your time - although it has to be said that time was invented to be wasted. In any case, the promises of bliss and endless joy are just snake oil, and we shouldn't forget that this is big business with millions of people willing to spend large amounts of their hard-earned money to realize the claims of the snake oil salesmen. If you want to meditate, do it because you like it, and not because you feel you have some divine duty to fulfill, or because you expect to be delivered from your misery. If you can meditate for two hours a day over thirty years and achieve absolutely nothing, you can be assured that your practice has been of the highest possible quality a human being can attain. Anything else is just second rate, and the time might have been spent more wisely watching 1950's sci-fi movies.

The awakened man - lust with intelligence.

Do you think the caged animal within you is happy? It's pacing backward and forward in the tiny space it is given, rubbing itself against the bars and creating bleeding sores. The obvious question to ask is, why did you cage your beast in the first place? What do you object to so strongly? All it wants to do is play, eat, fuck, and lay around. Ah, but playing and lazing around have no economic value, do they? And so the bars of the cage starts to appear - no playing or loafing about. Your real emotions also become wholly unacceptable - your hatred, resentments, envy, anger, and so the bars become higher and the space in the cage smaller. Well, we can't let a wild animal roam around, can we? In essence, the answer to the question is yes we can. Human beings also happen to be endowed with reason, and as the word might suggest, we can, with know-how, learn to treat our beast well and play the part of a responsible member of society (but it is just playing a part - never ever strive to be a good member of society). The doctrines that would say we have to whip the beast into submission are doctrines of cruelty, and in any case, if you kill the beast, you kill yourself. With intelligence, we can give the beast a good time. It will be happy and leave us free to pursue things other than sex, food, revenge, power - and so on. Such is the awakened man. He is awake to his beast, and he is awake to his intelligence. Lust with intelligence is awakening.

If you can observe it, you are not it.

You are not a teapot, although ingestion of certain substances might bring such a belief about. You are not any of the things your sensory apparatus presents to you - smells, sounds, sights, taste, touch. It gets a bit trickier when we get to the body. A toenail clipping, although once part of your body, is not you. Even when attached to your body, it would be a folly to say, "that is me." But where there is a connection via the nervous system, we are much more inclined to say, "this is me." Most would probably consider a hand to be part of them, although in reality, a hand is just another object but with the particular property that it is connected via the nervous system. The rest of the body can be treated in the same way - it is an object connected via a nervous system, so it's a bit special, but it is still not you. We come to emotions - surely they are part of what we are. Well, not really, emotions can be observed like anything else and are sensed in the body. We might think emotions are in mind, but it is only the associated thoughts about something that has caused an emotion that is in mind. The bottom line is that we can observe emotional states in the same way we can watch anything else. Finally, we come to thoughts. And yes, thoughts can be seen too, although they have a habit of hiding when we try to look at them. Even so, with a bit of practice, we can observe thoughts. Sensations, body, emotions, thoughts, and desires can all be observed - they are phenomena. So what is left? Well, clearly, there is something that can

observe, but what that thing is, we will never know because if we could observe it, we would not be that either. If you can observe it, you are not it.

The greatest freedom you can know is the realization of your complete insignificance.

Being something insignificant comes with a host of benefits. It means nothing you do is the least bit important. In a universe with four trillion galaxies, each with one hundred billion stars, it doesn't matter whether anyone likes your latest Facebook post. And it doesn't matter to the universe whether you wear shorts or jeans today, or even whether you make it to the end of the day. You could say - well, these things matter to me - and there is the rub. As soon as you think you are important and significant, so everything you do and everything that happens to you becomes critical. You can't have it both ways. If you want to be free, you need to feel your insignificance and that of the things that happen to you.

On the other hand, if you want to indulge in the illusion that you are the center of the universe, you will pay the price - constant anxiety because everything has become so desperately important. But there is an awful reality to all of this. When we believe we are important - in whose eyes are we important? I'm afraid it might boil down to just one person - yourself. True enough, you may have some people

close to you who feel you are important, but that's about it - the rest of the universe does not care. Depending on your attitude toward the world not caring, you will either be devastated or joyful beyond measure.

Is it not enough to sit and experience existence? Or does the whining baby in your head keep you fully occupied? If it does, then give it your attention, and eventually, it will stop whining and leave you free to simply sit and be.

Your whining baby - it never gives you peace. Life sucks, climate change, environmental disaster, economic depression, the stinging remarks other people made, your regrets, the stinging remarks you made, your crappy partner, your crappy job. I don't need to go on. So your whining baby will occupy itself with these things all day, and maybe even at night. It whines because generally speaking, it is not being listened to - and so it goes on and on. Give your whining baby some time, and some understanding, and slowly but surely it will stop whining and be quiet. This leaves you free to sit and experience your existence - something that surprisingly few people do - because they have a whining baby that consumes all their attention.

Contrary to popular opinion existing is superior to living. You have to exist before you can live, and as such, it is the

bedrock of your life. Living tends to involve a lot of noise, and so we don't find time to sit and experience our existence - which is a shame since existence is real. In contrast, living is mostly imagination and frantic activity.

Your knowing is like a swarm of maggots, all it will leave is the bones.

Science has become a religion for many people - it conveniently fills in the blanks that most cannot tolerate. Nature does abhor a vacuum after all. The fact that the world we know is a simulation created by the mind is almost wholly overlooked, although some forward-thinking scientists such as Douglas Hofmann are sticking their necks out to broadcast the message. So, if we cannot know the real world, but only our simulation, then what do we know? We know stuff about the simulation - science is a study of our simulation - the way our minds represent reality - but we don't know anything about reality itself, and of particular importance is the fact that we do not know what we are either. Our pretense of knowledge strips life of its mystery, leaving nothing more than hard materialism - the crassest and stupidest of all religions. The problem here is that most of us hate "don't know" and the appetite for understanding the nature of our situation is even rarer. This allows the peddlers of certainty to fill our heads with their dogma, and it is a fact that most people will be happy with doctrine, leaving them free to pursue their futile ambitions.

It might all be illusion and lies but the illusion and lies exist. Existence itself is the only truth.

The governing law of survival is the lie. People lie to each other and themselves. Businesses lie to each other and their customers. Politicians lie, spiritual people lie, animals lie through deception, and even plants deceive (the Venus flytrap, for example). On top of the deliberate lie is the illusory nature of existence. It is as though life lies to us through our senses. Railroad tracks do not meet in the distance, the moon is not really in a lake when we see it reflected, and a stick does not bend when we put it in water, even though it appears to. Thunder doesn't happen several seconds after the lightning flash, and sugar isn't sweet - sweetness is something our brains invent. There is nothing we can point at and say, "this is true." Our reality is the product of our mind in any case, and so we have no grasp on "reality" - whatever that might be. But here is something real in a world of lies and illusion - lies and illusions exist. Existence itself is the only truth.

Only zero is sanity. Zero expectations, opinions, desires, ambitions.

Scientists believe that the total energy in the universe is - zero. I say believe: it's much more than a belief, the numbers show it to be true to a high degree of accuracy.

The best kind of human life is also zero since you might have noticed that every up is accompanied by a down - and vice versa. On first impressions, you might doubt this, but lottery winners might serve as a good example. After the euphoria of a big win and no doubt a period of buying everything the heart could desire, most of them end up miserable, depressed, and in some cases, commit suicide. If you experience an "up," you would be well advised to anticipate a "down" - at least you can prepare for it. To have zero expectations is a wise move too. An expectation is a pleasure stolen before the event, and when the occasion arrives, it tends not to meet expectations. Indeed the hope can ruin an otherwise entirely satisfactory experience. Zero opinions mean you can avoid the pain of seeing your best-loved ideas proven wrong, and zero ambition means you can never be disappointed. It would be a rare human being who could live like this, but there are degrees. If you want to avoid the most frightening dips in the roller-coaster of life, then it might be as well to reign in your efforts to experience the highest leaks. And there is a problem associated with climbing ever higher peaks of expectation, opinion, and ambition - the next summit has to be higher, and what satisfied last time will be seen as a non-event next time. The problem is that as the peaks get higher, so will the troughs. Only zero is sanity.

The highest practice is not meditation, chanting, philosophizing, self remembering, or any other fabricated practice. The highest practice is to be whatever you happen to be right here and now.

Oh, it sounds so simple to be whatever you happen to be right here and now - but it isn't. For a start, we are always telling ourselves bullshit stories about how we should be - and "should" is such an evil word. Instead of being bored senseless by someone you consider to be important, you convince yourself that what is being said is meaningful and exciting. Or maybe you go to a swanky restaurant where the food is actually pretty awful, but because you are paying two hundred dollars, you tell yourself it is delicious. These lies we tell ourselves even extend to our "spiritual practices ". Maybe we tell ourselves that we a kind and loving when we feel spiteful and vindictive. The so-called negative emotions are wrong - or so we've been told, and we are very naughty indeed if we see them in ourselves. It's just another form of lying to oneself. There is a constant theme here. This inability to be honest about our inner state comes from self-judgment. We've been told what internal states are good and which ones are bad. As a result, we judge them quite automatically. Meditation, chanting, philosophizing, and the rest are not going to help. The highest practice (which is really no practice at all) is to have enough self-knowledge and inner honesty to be whatever you happen to be right here and now. It means

having the courage to acknowledge all those thoughts and emotions that you were told are evil. If you feel spiteful, then be spite - it doesn't mean you have to unleash your spite on an unsuspecting world, but it does mean you get to live a real inner life instead of one that is a constant source of internal conflict. Any form of self-censoring will result in unhappiness you can do without. In any case the censoring comes entirely from the things you have been told and read. You have allowed external authorities to become judge and jury and allow them to condemn your inner states. Tell them to go to hell.

It is the seeking that takes us away from the very thing being sought.

The industry that serves people seeking meaning, purpose, satisfaction is enormous. You could look at almost everything as a means of trying to satisfy this need - sport, entertainment, ambitions, material goods, romantic materialism (travel), spiritual pursuits, sex, food, religion, relationships. Some seeking is seen as more sophisticated than other efforts, but in the end, it's all seeking. Sure enough, many people come to realize that the usual trappings - money, fame, sensual pleasure - don't cut it. And let's not be too self-righteous here. If you don't have money, you will probably die, and the body certainly needs some level of sensual pleasure - food and sex particularly. But to embark on a quest in the belief that more and more

of these things will bring satisfaction is folly - it doesn't work. So, the search moves on from material things to "spiritual" things - meditation, mantras, devotion, distinctive dress, spiritual scriptures. But there is a common error in both the crass worldly and the spiritual seeking - both believe there is something outside oneself that can satisfy. And so the seeking takes us away from ourselves, focusing on anything from the next football game, to the next chakra cleanse. What people are seeking is sat on their face - which is why they can't see it. Come back to yourself and sink into the fullness of existence - your existence. It sounds simple enough, but the monkey mind is always looking for novelty, and the emotions tend to be activated by the least little thing, so sinking into the fullness of one's existence requires that we calm the emotions and the mind as best we can. For such calming, a great deal of knowledge is needed. It simply isn't enough to sit in zazen while an inner resentment is bubbling away because that person over there is getting more attention from the zen teacher than you are. The thing that is being sought, although most people do not realize it, is to experience their existence as fully as possible. Seeking is the thing that takes us all away from this state - the only one that will satisfy.

Does a tree exist when no one is looking at it? You will never know.

The answer to this question is way more complicated than might first appear. Philosophers have argued for millennia in attempts to reach a solution, and it would seem that the answer is unknown. We establish the reality of something through our experience of it - if there is no experience, then as far as we are concerned, a thing does not exist. It can, of course, be argued that because an item does not exist for us, this does not imply it does not exist at all. So, let's do a thought experiment. We see a tree in a forest, and we are the only ones looking at it. As soon as we walk away from the tree and can no longer see it, then it ceases to exist for any sentient creature, and as such no longer exists. But, you might argue, I know it continues to exist because when I look back at it, the tree is once again there. Well, it's there when you look back, but that is not the point. The whole argument becomes even more tortuous when we consider that it is our brain that creates this simulation called reality - the only things we can know are those created in the brain's simulation. If no brains are simulating an object, then it does not exist. From a common-sense point of view, there is no way to establish whether an object exists when there are no observers of it.